

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 COME-00 /017 W

----- 103253

R 100700Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0519

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

UNCLAS JIDDA 1699

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP

SUBJECT: RAILWAY TRADE MISSION

1. IN SPITE OF DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY DELAYED ARRIVAL, MISSION VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA WAS QUITE SUCCESSFUL WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ITS LIMITED SCOPE IN THIS COUNTRY. GROUP HAD THOROUGH TOUR OF RAILWAYS ORGANIZATION HEADQUARTERS IN DAMMAM WHERE THEY WERE VERY WELL RECEIVED, AND TOOK TRAIN TO RIYADY BY SPECIAL COACH PROVIDED BY R.R. ORGANIZATION, WITH OPPORTUNITY TO RIDE IN THE CAB ALONG THE WAY. PROGRAM IN RIYADH WAS COMPLETELY UPSET BY MISSION DECISION TO STAY AN EXTRA DAY IN DAMMAM DUE TO ARRIVAL THERE MID-DAY SATURDAY RATHER THAN FRIDAY NIGHT. RECEPTION TO HAVE BEEN HOSTED BY THE AMBASSADOR HAD TO BE CANCELLED AT THE LAST MINUTE, BUT WE MANAGED TO RESCHEDULE CALLS ON MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND AT CENTRAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION.

2. CALL ON THE MINISTER TURNED OUT TO HAVE RATHER MORE THAN PROTOCOL UTILITY. MISSION'S EVALUATION OF SAUDI ARABIA'S RAILWAY LINE AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT APPEARED TO IMPRESS HIM AND TO RESTIMULATE A FLAGGING INTEREST IN THE USEFULNESS OF A RAILWAY SYSTEM. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN THE MINISTER ASKED FOR SOME GUIDELINES ON WHAT WOULD

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BE INVOLVED FOR A TECHNICAL STUDY ON IMPROVEMENT

OF THE LINE, THE CONSULTANCY MEMBER OF THE MISSION (FORD, BACON AND DAVIS) COULD SAY ONLY THAT HE HIMSELF KNEW LITTLE ABOUT RAILROADS, AND WOULD HAVE TO REFER THE QUESTION TO EXPERTS IN HIS COMPANY.

3. DISRUPTION OF RIYADH PROGRAM CAUSED EMBASSY CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT AND DAMAGED OUR CREDIBILITY. THE EXTREMELY LARGE NUMBER OF VISITORS TO RIYADH THESE DAYS--AS WELL AS OTHER RECENT SNAFUS--MADE IT NECESSARY FOR US TO GIVE SOLEMN ASSURANCES THAT THE GROUP WOULD APPEAR AS SCHEDULED IN ORDER TO SECURE BOTH THE HOTEL RESERVATIONS AND THE APPOINTMENT WITH THE MINISTER. THEIR FAILURE TO DO SO WILL ASSUREDLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUTURE GROUPS.  
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